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February 13, 2013

Mr. Shawn Garvin
Region III Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Mr.  Garvin.

I am very concerned about the objections raised by the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority to the project alternative put forward by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in regard to the King Coal Highway/Buffalo Mountain Development Initiative.

In a letter to the West Virginia Secretary of Transportation, the Authority found the EPA's project alternative to be "fatally flawed." Emphasizing the economic importance of the King Coal Highway, the Authority expressed its concerns that the EPA would inhibit post-mine land development, including the construction of new housing for residents who currently reside in flood prone areas and for attracting new business and industry to the region.

As you know, with the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, the Congress intended to ensure that the economic benefits of mining lands lived long beyond the mining operations themselves. The law was intended to help communities with mountainous terrains to secure some relatively flat lands for post-mine development, and has enabled West Virginia communities to build highways and airports, commercial, industrial, and recreation facilities, as well as high schools, to diversify and strengthen their economies.

We need to be doing more, not less, to help Appalachian communities broaden their economic base. It is imperative that the EPA not hinder the significant economic and public benefits that can be achieved in Mingo County.

As discussions related to Buffalo Mountain move forward, I ask you to do all that you can to coordinate with state and local officials in a timely manner, and to keep me apprised of your agency's involvement in the permitting process.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,



NICK J. RAHALL, II
Member of Congress

NJR/js

